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LETTER DATED 1 APRIL 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Please find enclosed the letter dated 1 April 1997 from H.E. Ljubomir Frčkoski, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, concerning the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) mission in the Republic of Macedonia.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Naste CALOVSKI
Ambassador

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Annex

Letter dated 1 April 1997 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia addressed to the Secretary-General

Allow me to take this opportunity to express my deep respect to you, and in regard to your forthcoming report to the Security Council on the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) mission in the Republic of Macedonia, I would like to propose its extension in its full composition of 1,050 troops. Although Security Council resolution 1082 (1996) envisaged troop reduction, which may be understood as a reflection of an easing of tensions in this region before the adoption of the said resolution, the newly arisen circumstances in the region I already informed you about in my letter dated 7 March 1997 (S/1997/205, annex) have further worsened the situation. We are of the opinion that the current situation, burdened with the previously unresolved problems, has brought about the need to extend the existing mandate for the UNPREDEP mission in its unreduced composition for another six-month period.

In that context, I would like to point out that the ongoing events in the Republic of Albania caused by the bankruptcy of the "pyramid investment schemes" have resulted in the dissolution of the key security elements of the State: the army and the police. The blockade of the essential economic activities, engendering especially problems with the food supply, were the reason the international community undertook activities to overcome the situation. The Republic of Macedonia has also been involved in providing basic food necessities. Regardless of this aid, more and more often there are cases of various armed gangs trespassing into the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Thus, the problems of 1991/92 are being repeated, when, apart from the large number of border incidents, there were trespassers and armed robberies of Macedonian property. In such conditions, the presence of an objective foreign entity such as UNPREDEP would be of great importance, constituting a factor of credibility which would be able to verify or clarify eventual problems.

These current events are contributing to the still vulnerable security situation in the region, which could easily result in their interconnecting and spillover. In this context, I would like to outline briefly the other factors which, especially during the period from November 1996 to February 1997, have complicated the overall political and security situation in the region and have had direct implications for the Republic of Macedonia:

- Although the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords is in its advanced phase, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains fragile and complex, and requires the presence of military and civil structures, while the negative impact of the refugee problem and the changed ethnic structure continues to hinder the basic lines of communication and cooperation in the region, with a possibility that the crisis may spill over into the southern part of the region;

- Political unrest in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia caused by the controversies regarding the recognition of the victory of the opposition in the

local elections is further complicating the security situation in the region. In this framework, I would like to draw your attention in particular to the complexity of the situation in Kosovo. The long-term character of the Kosovo crisis in our immediate neighbourhood and the appearance of regular terrorist acts whose victims are both Albanians and Serbs, especially in the light of the latest events in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, are of special concern, as they constitute a permanent latent threat to peace and stability in the Republic of Macedonia and a potential source of escalation of inter-ethnic tensions in this part of the region. We agree with the increasingly wide support to the proposals submitted, especially those of Mrs. Rehn, and the necessity of a United Nations presence in Kosovo. The UNPREDEP presence in that context, especially before the implementation of the above-mentioned proposals, continues to be one of the key stabilizing factors in the region;

- The lifting of the arms embargo under United Nations Security Council resolution 1021 (1995) of 22 November 1995 did not itself bring about the necessary military effectiveness of the Macedonian army. Taking into consideration the modest financial capabilities of the State, in this short period it has been impossible to supply the appropriate equipment and arms for the armed forces of the Republic of Macedonia at a level that would provide for an appropriate initial reaction or a possible urgent military action;

- The process of demarcation of the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, through the Joint Commission of the Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is, to our regret, progressing at a slow pace. In spite of the publicly declared readiness to find acceptable modes for both countries, there has hitherto not been any breakthrough in the practical resolution of the issue.

I hope that you will bear in mind the aforementioned facts in support of extending the existing mandate and composition of UNPREDEP for the forthcoming six-month period when preparing the report to the Security Council, and that you will recommend another extension of the presence of the mission. Furthermore, with regard to the reconstitution of the military component of UNPREDEP, our assessment is that the newly arisen situation in the region still requires the presence of 1,050 troops, with the aim of successfully carrying out the obligations which result from the mandate with which the mission has been entrusted.

Considering the financial implications of reducing the mandate of UNPREDEP, I believe that by reducing the civil component of the mission you would achieve the desired effects, and this would especially correspond with the fact that there are already several existing United Nations agencies in the Republic of Macedonia while the establishment of the Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is also under way.

We would highly appreciate it if the text of the present letter could be made available to the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ljubomir FRČKOSKI